

Sample Flash Draft → Rehearsal → First Draft

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Flash Draft

In the summer of 2011, my girlfriend, Claire, and I went to Alaska for a three week vacation to visit her brother and his wife and to see some of the famous wilderness of that isolated American state. Ever since Claire's brother, John, moved to Alaska, we had been aching to make our way up there. While Claire had visited the state when she was younger on a trip with her family, I had never gone, but had heard many stories about the scenery, the wildlife, and the terrain. Once we booked our tickets, we knew we were in for a truly unique experience. This trip proved to be not only unique, but also was a turning point in our lives, for it was on this trip that we committed ourselves to each other forever.

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Rehearsal

I did not even have to ask the question. She looked in the camera case, then she looked back at me, an excited grin beginning to spread across her face. Slowly, I bent down to one knee and held my arms out for a hug. She pranced over and we embraced. No one in the camping area of the outfitter had any idea the most important day of our lives just took place; they just kept sleeping, eating breakfast, or packing up their belongings. We took a few minutes to enjoy the moment, holding hands and laughing about Claire's unawareness of my sneaky scheme to bring an engagement ring with us into the Alaska wild. We let it all sink in.

Leading up to the trip, I had been pulling a lot of strings to get Claire's grandmother's engagement ring into my hands without Claire's knowledge, then hide it from her until the moment I asked her to marry me. She had always wanted that family relic to be part of her marriage plan, and had more than hinted to me that I would need to get it into my possession to be used as her engagement ring. This was not necessarily challenging, as Claire's dad had the ring at his house, but finding a way to get the ring while in Minnesota could prove difficult, if only because both of our families live there, and I would need to separate from Claire and get in touch with her dad while she was off doing something else. Ultimately, I flew back into Minnesota for a different reason prior to our trip to Alaska anyway while Claire stayed in DC, which made the transaction much easier to manage.

Now that ring was buried in a weird crevice inside one of our packs, just waiting to be found by my soon-to-be-fiancee that would have put months of planning into jeopardy. As we turned off our headlamps to get some rest before our big canoe trip, my body refused to ignore the tense, anxious feeling about what might happen the next morning. What if she finds the ring? What if I can't distract her to put the ring in the camera case? What is my Plan B? What if she gets annoyed for risking the safety of her grandmother's ring by bringing into the Alaskan wild with us? There were too many questions running through my mind to think about sleeping. I tried everything -- lying on my back, on my side, listening to music, lying on the other side, putting one leg out of my sleeping bag and

leaving one leg in to stay cool, adjusting my clothes-pillow -- but it was all for naught. I was simply too nervous.

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First Draft

"Well, I don't know -- should I ask Claire what she thinks?" Bob said jokingly in response to my request for permission to marry his daughter and my girlfriend of the last six years. "No, Joe, I am just kidding. I would be honored if you married Claire." That conversation with Claire's father was the first of many hurdles and stressful tasks I would encounter to lead up to the moment I asked Claire the most important question I would ever ask.

The mountains of Alaska stretched toward the sky like the pyramids of Giza in Egypt, brown masses that seemed to extend to the edge of the horizon in nearly every direction. Driving the car should have been relaxing with all of the beauty surrounding us, but the temptation to stare at the landscape instead of the road made the job almost grueling. Add to that picturesque scenery the constant thoughts running through my head about how my proposal to Claire would pan out the next morning, and it made for quite a distracting ride to our campground.

"Why don't we live out here?" Claire asked animatedly as we wrapped around the bend of yet another mountain.

"That is an excellent question -- what are we thinking? This place is unbelievable," I responded, thankful to get my mind off the encroaching proposal.

Once we arrived at the outfitter, we had plenty to do to keep ourselves occupied -- paying for the equipment, getting the equipment and maps, setting up our tent, getting our gear organized for the next day, preparing a fire and dinner. Once all of that ended, however, and we got ourselves ready for sleep, my pulse started to beat more rapidly, gradually building as if I was in the middle of a horror movie's climax. I was sighing early and often to steady my mind, and my eyes constantly peered toward the pocket in my camera bag that held the ring. I thought of nothing else but what could go wrong tomorrow morning when I ask the question that will change our lives forever.

Leading up to the trip, I had been pulling a lot of strings to get Claire's grandmother's engagement ring into my hands without Claire's knowledge, then hide it from her until the moment I asked her to marry me. She had always wanted that family relic to be part of her marriage plan, and had more than hinted to me that I would need to get it into my possession to be used as her engagement ring. This was not necessarily challenging, as Claire's dad had the ring at his house, but finding a way to get the ring while in Minnesota could prove difficult, if only because both of our families live there, and I would need to separate from Claire and get in touch with her dad while she was off doing something else. Ultimately, I flew back into Minnesota for a different reason prior to our trip to Alaska anyway while Claire stayed in DC, which made the transaction much easier to manage.

Now that ring was just waiting to be found by my soon-to-be-fiancee, putting months of planning into jeopardy. When it was time to get some sleep, my body refused to

ignore the tense, anxious feeling about what might happen the next morning. *What if she finds the ring? What if I can't distract her to put the ring in the camera case? What is my Plan B? What if she gets annoyed for risking the safety of her grandmother's ring by bringing into the Alaskan wild with us?* There were too many questions running through my mind to think about sleeping. I tried everything -- lying on my back, on my side, listening to music, lying on the other side, putting one leg out of my sleeping bag and leaving one leg in to stay cool, adjusting my clothes-pillow -- but it was all for naught. I was simply too nervous.

Eventually, I was able to sleep for one glorious hour. As soon as our alarms went off, Operation Marriage Proposal went into effect. I had run through the to-do list in my head so many times I am unsure if there was anything else that even crossed my mind the previous night.

I continually waited for Claire to leave the campsite so she could brush her teeth, but it was not happening.

"Why don't you go brush your teeth while I pack up my stuff?" she asked me. Panicked thoughts raced through my head; I only hope I didn't show it.

This wasn't part of the plan! What do I say? What do I do? How do I dodge this?

"I'll go in a few minutes, I want to get some of this other stuff packed up first," I replied.

Brilliant, Joe! Brilliant response!

What happened next could not have been more perfect. What seemed like the end only a moment ago turned into an opportunity.

"OK. I'll go brush my teeth then," Claire said.

Haha! Fantastic! Providence is looking down on me today! This is a glorious day!

"Sounds good," was all I said.

Just play it cool, boy .real cool.

While Claire went off to brush her teeth, I acted like I was being productive when in reality I was moving random gear around, keeping her in the corner of my eye until I was sure she would not see me. When that moment came, I immediately opened the camera bag, took out the ring box and opened it, then set it inside the space reserved for the camera and closed the camera case. I left the camera out, then quickly moved over to another part of the campsite and started acting productive again, for Claire was on her way back.

"Claire, could you put the camera in the camera case?" I asked.

Too soon! She'll know something's up for sure!

"Yeah, where is it?"

She didn't suspect a thing! Huzah!

"In the trunk of the car."

Now the moment had come. I watched Claire open the camera case hurriedly, then stop.

She stared into the case for a few seconds. She clearly saw the ring. Turning around, a grin spread widely across her face, she looked at me briefly.

"What are you doing....?" she asked curiously. I rested my left knee on the ground. Her smile grew ever wider.

Example 1:

As I walked my dog one day, I stepped awkwardly onto a step while going up a staircase. I sat down to rub and nurse my hurt ankle. My dog came and sat next to me as I rubbed at the throbbing soreness. I patted him on the head, which briefly helped ease the pain.

Example 2:

I was out walking my dog, Buster, one day when I stepped awkwardly onto a step while going up a staircase, twisting it badly and propelling a sharp pain straight up my leg. While I took the weight off my ankle and did my best to massage the sore spot, Buster walked up and nuzzled himself next to me, resting his chin on my lap. His dark, droopy eyes looked straight at me, as if sensing my pain and wishing there were a way for him to help. "Thanks, buddy," I said, patting his head. In that moment, I noticed the pain in my ankle

had briefly subsided.